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# THIRD CONCEPT

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- ❖ **Japan-India Relations**
- ❖ **Nehru as a Parliamentarian**
- ❖ **Social Justice in a Welfare State**
- ❖ **Rural Healthcare**
- ❖ **Tribal Development in J&K**
- ❖ **Claims for Social Justice**



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**Third Concept** aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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## **India & Gulf Kerfuffle**

**T**he Gulf kerfuffle that has obtained in the wake of Saudi Arabia, along with some other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) cutting off ties with Qatar on June 5, over Qatar's alleged support to Islamists and Iran; the regional power play in the Arab Gulf region has put India in a spot from geostrategic and geo-economic perspectives. India imports bulk of its oil and gas supplies from the GCC countries and the region is also significant for India from trade and investment aspects. Besides, over 8 million Indians are working the Gulf and their remittances constitute an important part of national economy. In other words, any toward development in the Gulf region entails potential of jeopardizing India's geopolitical and geo-economic stakes in the region.

A whopping 8.16 million Indians, about 72 per cent, of total Indian Diaspora abroad, is present in the GCC region. Among the six GCC countries, Saudi Arabia is counted to have maximum number of NRIs, totalling 2,960,000 to be followed by the UAE with NRIs numbering 2,600,000, and Kuwait is the third largest centre of Indian Diaspora among the GCC countries. The Sultanate of Oman is home to a total of 795,082 of NRIs. After Oman comes Qatar with 630,000 NRIs and Bahrain happens to have 295,504 NRIs and it is the only GCC country where the NRI population has fallen by over 15 per cent from 350,000 in January 2015. The Indian expats in the GCC countries contribute substantially to the consolidation of bilateral relations and their remittances have contributed significantly to India's economic resurgence. The GCC is the second-largest source for remittances for India after North America, accounting for around 35 per cent of the total remittances to India. In 2015, India attracted \$ 69 billion in remittances world wide of which \$ 36. 06 billion was from the GCC countries – UAE \$ 12.57 billion, Saudi Arabia \$ 10.51 billion, Kuwait \$ 4.69 billion, Qatar \$ 3.97 billion, Oman \$ 3.07 billion and Bahrain \$ 1.25 billion.

In 2016, India's remittances stood at \$62.7 billion, registering a significant 8.9 per cent drop in remittances as compared to 2015 and this was attributable mainly to the drop in oil prices and fiscal tightening and weak economic growth in the GCC countries. In the wake of ongoing Gulf crisis, India now has to navigate the fault lines in the region. Government has done well by underlining Delhi's non-interfering position and playing down its impact on India, saying that India has good ties with all regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Under the given circumstances, especially when New Delhi enjoys cordial relations with the GCC countries, Government has seemingly taken wise decision by describing the situation as an "internal issue" of the GCC countries and concurrently for it the only worry is about Indian nationals who may be caught in between the rival countries, in the wake of travel bans on Qatar.

Although India has deftly engaged the regional players over the last three years, it will be interesting to watch how the Modi government will respond to the emerging challenges in the region. Asserting that India's strategic and security interests are intertwined with its relations with these West Asian countries, some experts opine that it will be difficult for India to choose sides. Besides, India's energy dependence on West Asia is very high both in oil and gas sectors and in this regard it opined that a turmoil in the Gulf, as was witnessed during the Gulf war, Arab Spring, war in Yemen, Libya crisis, has always had the tendency to adversely impact the flow of energy from the region to India. According to some observers, an immediate issue which India will face will be the movement of workers in the region, as Qatar Airways will find itself isolated after the Saudi-led alliance's decision to impose a travel ban. Many Indians use Qatar Airways to travel to Doha and other places in the region, which some experts feel, could pose a big challenge for the Indian government to navigate. Under the prevailing situation, New Delhi needs to tread a cautious path, especially in regard to the conditions affecting the Indian Diaspora in the region. — BK